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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ AND THE FARC KEEP GOC IN THE DARK

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer - Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Prompted by press reports of a President Chavez-FARC meeting, GOC Peace Commissioner Restrepo issued a statement on November 7 stating that Chavez had not informed the GOC of his encounter--as Uribe and Chavez had previously agreed. A senior GOC official voiced skepticism about Chavez' facilitation effort, and confirmed that the GOC maintains its four "non-negotiable" points (no demilitarized zone, no return of FARC fighters to the ranks, all hostages included in a release, and no political recognition for the FARC). Local media interpreted the return of released FARC "Foreign Minister" Rodrigo Granda to the 'mountains of Colombia' on the eve of the Chavez-FARC meeting as a bad sign. End summary.

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GOC Learns of Chavez-FARC Meeting Through Media
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¶2. (U) Responding to press reports that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez met with representatives of the FARC in Venezuela, Colombian Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo issued a statement on November 7 saying the GOC had not been informed of the visit "as had been previously agreed" by the two presidents. Restrepo said the GOC learned of the Chavez-FARC meeting through the media. Restrepo added on November 8 that a planned meeting between Chavez and President Alvaro Uribe at the Ibero-American summit in Chile had been canceled since Chavez had decided not to attend.

¶3. (C) Presidential Advisor Jose Obdulio Gaviria told us the FARC likely was represented in Venezuela by Secretariat member Ivan Marquez and FARC "Foreign Minister" Rodrigo Granda. He claimed that FARC International Relations representative Raul Reyes had found it difficult to get out of Colombia due to Colombian military action, and he doubted Mono Jojoy would participate. The FARC was feeling significant military pressure after the killing of 37th Front commander Martin Caballero in Bolivar in October and 16th Front Commander "Negro Acacio" August 1.

¶4. (C) Gaviria confirmed the GOC will not yield on its four non-negotiable points (inamovibles): no demilitarized zone (or "despeje"), no return of released FARC members to criminal activity, all hostages to be included in a humanitarian exchange package, and no high-level political show for FARC. He said the GOC remains skeptical about the

process, but needs to play it out. If the FARC released the hostages, the GOC would win because the FARC would lose the only card that gives it international political relevance. Chavez would also gain international prestige, but the GOC would have to accept this. If the process failed, the key would be to avoid taking the blame.

15. (C) Gaviria said humanitarian exchange facilitator Senator Piedad Cordoba had succeeded in getting the process moving, but added that the GOC had no illusions about her political sympathies. The GOC considered Cordoba close to the FARC--at least one FARC member was a member of her legislative staff. Gaviria said the GOC does not go after the staffer--as well as other FARC sympathizers in Bogota--because it knew it would be a "political disaster." Finally, Gaviria said Cordoba accepted that "Simon Trinidad and "Sonia" would not be released as part of any deal.

FARC Already Violating GOC Non-Negotiables

16. (C) El Tiempo Editor Enrique Santos told us prospects for progress on an exchange appeared bleak. The FARC and Chavez appeared to be using "dilatory tactics" as shown by Chavez' claim that a commitment by FARC leader Manuel Marulanda to order the provision of proof of life--instead of providing proof life--constituted progress. Santos said the FARC's violation of the terms of Granda's release from prison--as well as the second of the GOC's non-negotiable points--on the eve of the meeting with Chavez was another negative sign. The FARC issued a photograph of Granda with Secretariat member Ivan Marquez on November 5. Granda also issued a communique on November 6 celebrating his return to the struggle and the "mountains of Colombia."

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